

PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-18

LESSON: LEARNING CONTENTMENT

December 17, 2023

INTRODUCTION:

4:2-3 The plea is for all quarrelers to agree in the Lord. The source of the disturbance in the church was due to two prominent ladies in the church: Eurodias and Syntyche. Paul pleaded for the two ladies to get their minds together **"in the Lord."** Eurodias mean **"prosperous journey"** and Syntyche means **"pleasant acquaintance."** There is no time for arguing and divisiveness. The need is for a true friend, a **"yokefellow"** to step in and help any who are quarreling. The word **"yokefellow"** (sunzuge) is thought by some to be a proper name given to some Christians when they were baptized; someone deeply respected by the people of the church. Therefore, **"yokefellow"** means a person who pulls and works cooperatively with others. Paul was that very one who cared; who was thought to be the one who could solve the dispute and bring about reconciliation; who admonishes them to be of the same mind in the Lord and think the same thing. Peace and unity must be preserved.

1. **The first step** to peace is standing fast. Walk, pray, and keep your mind and thoughts upon the Lord (4:1).
2. **The second step** to peace is agreement and unity. There is no peace if people are...
 - arguing • bickering • biting • brawling • wrangling • disputing • dissenting
 - grumbling • criticizing

The quarrelers were co-laborers in the gospel. They had helped Paul and Clement and others in the church. They needed to be serving in the gospel, not arguing and differing. Another thing was that their names were in the Book of Life. They were true believers who had slipped back into a life of sinful divisiveness. Most churches have one or more **"yokefellow"**, persons...

- who love and care deeply for others.
- who are always helping and ministering to others.
- whom God has gifted and appointed to be ministerial helpers to the flock.
- who are highly respected and esteemed by most in the congregation.

It is possible to believe in Christ, work hard for His kingdom, and yet have broken relationships with others who are committed to the same cause. But there is no excuse for remaining unreconciled.

LESSON: I. REJOICING IN CHRIST'S PRESENCE PHILIPPIANS 4:4-5

4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. The Christian is not gloom, but glorious.

Paul exhorts them to keep on rejoicing. Remember Paul is in prison, and the church is having a problem, yet Paul tells them, that they are to walk about rejoicing in the Lord. We talked about this same thing in Chapter 3. But Paul's attitude serves to teach us an important lesson: our inner attitudes do not have to reflect our outward circumstances. Paul was full of joy because



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

he knew that no matter what happened to him, Jesus Christ was with him. Several times in this letter Paul urges the Philippians to be joyful.

3. **The third step** to peace is rejoicing in the Lord. This is a continued and repeated thing. Joy drives out discord and is contagious. Christians rejoice because they are in living union with Christ. Ultimate joy comes from Christ dwelling within us because the one who dwells within us will fulfill the final purpose for us.

4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. We now come to the fourth step to peace and an attitude to cultivate. The word "**moderation**" (epieikes) is translated as gentleness, forbearance, consideration, reasonableness, agreeableness, courtesy, patience, and softness. This is the opposite of stubbornness and thoughtlessness.

4. **The fourth step** to peace is a strong gentleness.

The exhortation not only deals with believers with the church, but with unbelievers. **The point is:** we must be gentle and forbearing in dealing with believers and unbelievers. We must reach out to the world with the gospel and treat unbelievers as well as believers with a loving gentleness and not with harshness.

- Too many of us are harsh and critical or neglectful and withdrawn.
- Too many of us are wrapped in the cloak of religion having nothing to do with reaching out to the lost.
- The desperate need of the hour is for us to reach out with the gospel, in a spirit of love and gentleness.

Why? Because the Lord is at hand (near). He is coming, and when He comes, everyone of us will only hope that He will treat us with gentleness. Only if we are forgiving toward others will the Lord be forgiving toward us.

II. REJOICING IN CHRIST'S PEACE PHILIPPIANS 4:6-9

4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Paul gives a charge: be "**anxious**" (merimnate) about nothing. The idea is that the believer is not to worry or fret about a single thing. The word "**nothing**" (meden) means not even one thing.

- Humanly speaking the Philippians had every reason to worry and be anxious;
- They were suffering severe persecution (**Phili.1:18-19**)
- They were facing a disturbance in the church, some disunity and quarreling (**Phili.1:27, 42**).
- They had some carnal members within their fellowship, some members who were prideful, superspiritual, and self-centered (**Phili.2:3-4; 3:12**)
- They were facing some false teachers who had joined their fellowship, and these teachers were fierce in attacking the cross of Christ (**Phili.3:2-3, 18-19**)
- Some of the believers were having to struggle for the necessities of life: food, clothing, and shelter (**Phili.4:19**)

In the midst of such circumstances, the only way a person can keep from worrying is to receive an injection of supernatural power. This brings us to the next step to peace. The remedy for anxiety and worry is...

5. **The fifth step** to peace is thru prayer.

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PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

The four words used shows exactly how prayer is the answer.

1. The word "**prayer**" (proseuche) refers to the special times of communication with God; set times that we share in periods of devotion and worship.
2. The word "**supplication**" (deesis) refers to the prayers that focus upon special needs; we pour out our soul to God; struggle when facing times of deep and intense need. Therefore, we come and lay out before Him as a child: crying, pleading, and begging for His help, comfort, deliverance and peace.
3. The word "**thanksgiving**" (eucharistia) means that we thank and praise God for all that He is and for all that He has done for us all day long as we walk and move about.
4. The word "**requests**" (aitemata) means specific and definite needs. Our praying is not to be general, but specific. We are to lay before God exactly what is needed and we are not to fear that we are being too detailed with God or bothering God. Neither are we to hold back from asking because we fear He will not answer something so specific. Too often believers fear—not receiving the answer to a specific request; fear that it will show how weak they are spiritually if the request is not granted.

Note what scripture says: "**In everything**" pray like this—use all four ways of praying and use them to pray about everything in order to receive the promise—peace.

4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. The "**peace of God**" goes way beyond all that we can even ask or imagine. It excels and surpasses everything we could have hoped for. One may have peace with God without having the peace of God. Peace with God is dependent upon faith, and peace of God is dependent on prayer. Peace with God describes the state between God and the Christian, and the peace of God describes the condition within the Christian. "**Peace**" (eirene) means to be bound joined, and woven together. It means to be assured, confident, and secure in the love and care of God. It means to have a sense, a knowledge, a consciousness that God will... provide
•guide •strengthen •sustain •deliver •encourage •save •give real life both now and forever.

A person can experience the peace of God only as he walks and moves about in prayer. Why? Because only God can deliver man through the most severe circumstances and tragedies of life. Only God can infuse assurance and security within the human soul. The wonderful promise of the peace of God is two-fold.

1. **First**, the peace of God passes all understanding; which surpasses all power of human reason or comprehension (Eph.3:20). It is a mystery. God does not promise that He will give us a full understanding of those matters we bring to Him in prayer. He only promises to give us peace. This is a state of being where you are calm in the heart and mind despite the fact that turmoil and strife are raging around you. It is a peace that is divine in origin. It is a peace that cannot be disrupted by the problems, disturbances and difficulties of life. Inner friction of soul often results in outer conflict with people. The peace of God in the Christian will keep peace in the church because it's bigger than our emotions. Our consistent communicating with God does it.
2. **Second**, the peace of God keeps our hearts and minds. Paul mentions the heart. He is referring to the seat of our emotions. The heart is the place from which our feelings come. When Paul mentions the mind, he is referring to the place where we do our thinking. The





PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

word "**shall keep**" (phrouresei) is a military word meaning to garrison, to keep guard and protect. When Paul wrote these very words, he had a Roman guard on either side of him. They were "**standing guard**" over the man of God. Paul says that God's peace is like a guard that protects the heart from wrong feelings and the mind from wrong thoughts!

4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever...

6. The sixth step to peace is thru a Christlike mind.

The word "**think**" (logizesthe) means to consider, reflect, and ponder. The idea is that of focusing our thoughts until they shape our behavior. The truth is:

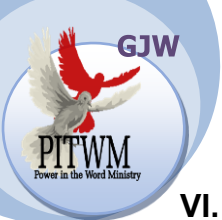
- What we think is what we become.
- Where we have kept our minds is where we are.
- Our thoughts shape our behavior.
- What we do is what we think.

A person who will center his thoughts upon the world and its things, will live for the world and its things: money, wealth, land, property, houses, possessions, position, power, recognition, honor, social standing, fame, and a host of other worldly pursuits. A mind set upon the world and the flesh is what leads to anxiety and worry, emptiness and restlessness. This was the stress of the former point (v.v.6-7). A worldly mind never knows peace, not the peace of God.

The point is this: when a person accepts Jesus Christ, his mind is renewed by the Spirit of God. Once a person has been converted to Christ and becomes a new man, he is to focus his thoughts upon the good things of life and upon God. Sinful and negative thoughts disrupt and destroy peace. For this reason, the believer is to struggle to conquer his mind and thoughts.

1. The charge is to think and practice having the mind of Christ to think on these things.

- I. Whatsoever things are true, (alethe):** real and genuine. Many things in the world seems to be true, but they are not; they are false and deceptive, an illusion, escapism. What we put in our minds determines what comes out in our words and actions. Keep your mind upon things that are true and there will be no room for evil, no room for worry, no room for fear, no room for vengeance, no room for confusion and trouble. A mind filled with and led by the Word of God is a stable mind!
- II. Whatsoever things are honest, (semna):** honorable, worthy, revered, highly respected, and noble; things of character, things honorable of persons or deeds. Barclay says: *"The word really describes that which has the dignity of holiness upon it, but it is on the things which are grave and serious and dignified that the Christian will set his mind."*
- III. Whatsoever things are just, (diakia):** right and righteous behavior; Upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commandments of God—whatever conforms us to do the Will of God. The believer is to keep his thoughts upon his duty toward men and God—upon doing what is right toward both. A mind filled with just and righteous thoughts will know peace.
- IV. Whatsoever things are pure, (hagna):** morally clean, spotless, stainless, chaste, undefiled, free from moral pollution, filth, dirt, and impurities; clean, chaste, modest, and free from carnality. The believer's mind and thoughts are to be pure thoughts.
- V. Whatsoever things are lovely, (prospheile):** pleasing, winsome, kind, gracious; things that excite love and kindness and pleasing to the believer, which is to please God. The believer's thoughts are not to be thoughts of unkindness and meanness, grumbling and



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

murmuring, criticism and reaction. We are to focus on things that are lovely—that build people up, not tear them down.

VI. **Whatsoever things are of good report**; (euphema): refutable, high-toned, worthy things; things of the highest quality; speaking things that are good and encouraging.

VII. **if there be any virtue**, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Anything that encourages moral excellence and that is praiseworthy, then THINK, right now, on these things!

2. The source or power for a Christlike mind is threefold:

1. There is the Word of God. Paul says that he had preached and taught the very virtues of positive thinking to the Philippians, and that they had learned them. What Paul had preached and taught was the Will of God; therefore, the source or power for positive thinking comes from the Word of God.

4:9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

2. There are noble examples. Paul says that he lived as a testimony before the Philippians. Therefore, they could follow his example because he kept his thoughts and life upon the very virtues of the God of peace.
3. There is self-effort. The world and flesh is what leads to anxiety, emptiness and restlessness, for a worldly mind never knows peace—not true peace, not the peace of God. God will not just never allow a worldly mind to have peace, for it is the restlessness of the human and that He uses to reach men for salvation. **The point is this**: when a person accepts Jesus Christ, his mind is renewed by the Spirit of God!

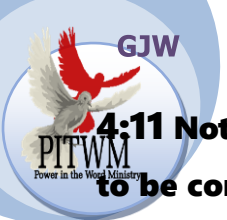
The word, "**Those things ...do.**" The believer is expected to control and discipline his mind because of what they've learned, received, heard and seen Paul do. And then the God of peace shall be with the believer.

This passage deals with stewardship, in particular the giving of money to meet the needs of ministers and missions for the spread of the gospel to the world. Paul was in prison facing the death penalty. The Philippians had heard that Paul was standing fast and continued to preach the gospel to everyone who visited him. The church was stirred to do two things: to take up a love offering, and to send a man, Epaphroditus, to minister to Paul's needs.

III. REJOICING IN CHRIST'S PROVISION PHILIPPIANS 4:10-18

4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. The Philippians had sent a love offering and Paul's cup of joy overflowed. He rejoiced in the Lord; not in the gift, but their giving flourished again. Note the words "**flourished again**" (anethalete) means to revive again. It is the picture of plants and flowers sprouting, shooting up, and blossoming again. The key word is again. When the church had been founded, the believers had supported Paul and his mission work on a regular basis. But for some reason they had dropped their mission support. Why had they stopped sending support to Paul is unknown? Paul just passed over the issue by saying that he knew they cared for him, but they had just lacked opportunity to support him. However, the point to see is: they picked up the support of Paul once again, and their giving flourished and blossomed anew.





PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. Paul is telling the people that he's not in want of anything because of whatever state he's found himself in, he's learned to be content. The word "**content**" (autarkeia) means to be self-sufficient; to be completely detached from circumstances and still be in circumstances. This "**contentment**" was something he had learned. The lesson of contentment was one he learned by degrees in varying circumstances; lengthy trials and discipline. In all things he continued to be strong by the One who infuses his power. God teaches His servants to be content, no matter the circumstances. Note the word "**learned**." Paul did not always know this precious truth. We are not born contented nor do we gravitate instinctively toward contentment because it is a virtue that has to be learned. Paul had to learn to conquer circumstances, and not to let circumstances conquer him. Contentment is a Christian virtue, a mark of Christian maturity. Note three things:

4. **4:12 Paul said, I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.** Paul says, *"I know how... Paul was in prison and in chains; in want and in hunger. But note: he had learned to be abased (made low) and I know how to abound (be prosperous) everywhere and in all things."* You might be saved and have much in this world, and still don't know the secret is in Christ.
5. **4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.** God teaches His servants that it's through Christ that they are strengthened to do and can do all things (4:13). Christ does not do everything for the believer; neither does the believer do everything for himself. The believer declares, "**I can**", and gets up and faces the circumstances head on. It is then that Christ steps in and infuses strength into the believer while the believer is tackling the problem. Then he can say *"I can do all things through Christ."* 'Because Christ gives him the strength to do them!' Just Believe!
6. **4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.** The minister needs daily provisions; the gospel needs to be supported; so that, it can be carried around the world. Money and support are greatly needed. God can do the job without us; God can bypass us and put us on the shelf just like a useless book. But He wants His people to give generously. When they do, they perform a work that is well done; that is commendable and noble.

4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. Paul is recalling to their remembrance that when the Philippian church was founded, they supported the ministry of Paul, and they were the only church who consistently gave.

4:16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. And Paul says even in Thessalonica, for it was while he was in Thessalonica that the Philippians supported him while he faced severe persecution (Acts 17:1).





PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

4:17 Not because I deserve a gift, but I deserve fruit that may abound to your account. The church's giving was and still is (1.) sacrificial, and it's (2.) seen and (3.) rewarded by God. Paul says not because he deserves a gift, but he deserves fruit from his labor that it may abound to the people's account. The church's giving was not necessary, but it was needed. God will take care of His dear servant even if churches do not adequately care for the man-of-God. This has been part of the sufferings most ministers have to bear in order to carry the gospel forth to a world that's in desperate need. The gift cost the Philippian church. God saw who sacrificially gave to support Paul, and God deposited a reward to the Philippians' account. Paul is showing them that he didn't deserve a gift, but his desire was for the fruit; the reward would accumulate; explode into their account because of their gift! You can't get until you give! Nothing comes in until you let go!

4:18 But I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. We can see the contentment in Paul: *"I have all and abound: I am full."* He received something money couldn't buy. The Philippians sent a fellow servant; a co-laborer to help Paul. Epaphroditus brought the things sent by the Philippians that lifted Paul so much that it seemed like a gift from heaven. Paul described it as a sweet smelling odor; an acceptable sacrifice, and that God was well pleased with their giving! This was a welcomed and pleasant taste of heaven!

SUMMARY:

Rejoice because of Christ. Let your graciousness overlook faults and failures of others. Why? For the Lord is at hand and may come at any moment (4:4-5).

Paul first told them to rejoice. Now, he tells them to be careful for nothing, meaning stop being anxious and do not have the habit of worrying, but it will be by their prayer and supplication, with thankfulness that they will let their request be made known unto God that they will receive the promise of the peace they're looking for. Prayer is our alternative to fear and worry. We have no problem that He does not have an answer for. Now the peace of God can come in—through prayer. Not simply peace, but the God of peace; the peace God gives will surpass all their understanding; all their human reasoning to keep their hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. My acronym for PEACE is *"Pause Everyday Appreciating Christ's Embrace !"* –PEACE! Then he says finally brethren, meditate upon things worthy of virtue and praise, and follow Paul's example. Paul tells us to fix our thoughts on six steps to that peace: what is

¹True - In speech; Honest - In action;

Just – With regard to others;

Pure - With regard to yourselves;





PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

Lovely - And what's more lovely than truth?

Of good report - As is honesty, even where it is not practiced.

If there be any virtue - And all virtues are contained in justice. If there be any praise - In those things which are deemed worthy. Think on those things and practice those things that they have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in him. This is where the God of peace shall be with them. Paul says that he greatly rejoices in the Lord (**4:6-9**).

Now, this was the time that their care for him has flourished again, for they were always interested, but had no opportunity to show it. Paul was not complaining for he has learned that whatsoever state or situation he has found himself in, he will be content. This "**contentment**" was something he had learned. He knows how to face hungry; abounding or suffering need. The reason is that he knows that he can do tall things only through Christ which strengthens him. Still, Paul thanks them that they have done the right thing in contributing to the help of his affliction; that is sharing in his troubles. Paul had received a love offering from the Philippians. He rejoiced when they were able to care for him again; not to hint that he was in great need, for he could do all things through Christ. Paul's expression of thanks over-flowed—expressing joy and gratitude for the gift they had sent by way of Epaphroditus. To Paul it made no difference whether he was freed or bound to a soldier, whether the day was hot and humid or bleak and frigid, whether the Philippians sent a gift or failed to make contact. He is thankful, even though he was quite content with the "**state**" or condition he found himself in, for he knew that their gift really blossomed to their account. They had discovered that giving sacrificially enriches the giver. We can see the contentment in Paul. He received something money couldn't buy. The Philippians sent through Epaproditus a sweet smelling odor; an acceptable sacrifice, showing that God was well pleased with their giving! This was a welcomed and pleasant taste of heaven! (**4:10-18**).

APPLICATION:

Trusting God is the opposite of worry. Pray about everything, meditate on the Word of God, and finally, the peace of God will come, and thereby "**contentment**" will be learned.

